1. (Amended) Compositions for the preservative treatment of raw animal hides, characterized in that such compositions contain a mixture of:

- at least one superabsorbent (co)polymer capable of absorbing the internal moisture of the rawhide when deposited on the surface of the hide, while allowing the internal moisture necessary for good preservation of the hide to remain, and of
- at least one other hydrophilic agent,
- optionally bactericides, preservative agents, and the like,

wherein the monomers used to form the superabsorbent polymers are selected from among the following

(1) Monomers containing carboxyl groups: mono or polycarboxylic acids with monoethylene unsaturation;

(2) Monomers containing groups of the carboxylic acid anhydride type: polycarboxylic acid anhydrides with monoethylene unsaturation;

(3) Monomers containing carboxylic acid salts: water-soluble salts (alkaline metal salts, ammonium salts, amine salts, etc.) of mono or polycarboxylic acids with monoethylene unsaturation;

(4) Monomers containing sulfonic acid groups: aliphatic or aromatic vinylsulfonic acids;

(5) Monomers containing sulfonic acid groups: alkaline metal salts, ammonium salts, amino salts of monomers containing sulfonic acid groups;

(6) Monomers containing hydroxyl groups: alcohols with monoethylene unsaturation;

(7) Monomers containing amide groups: (meth)acrylamide, N-alkyl (meth)acrylamides, N,N-dialkyl (meth)acrylamides, N-hydroxyalkyl (meth)acrylamides, vinyl lactames;

(8) Monomers containing amino groups: esters containing amino groups of mono or di-carboxylic acid with monoethylene unsaturation heterocyclic vinyl compounds;

(9) Monomers containing groups of quaternary ammonium salts: salts of N,N,N-trialkyl-N-(meth)acryloyloxyalkylammonium.

2. (Amended) Compositions for the preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 1, wherein the superabsorbent polymers are capable of absorbing the internal moisture of the rawhide when such polymers are deposited on the surface of the hide, while allowing a residual moisture ranging from 20 to 70% by weight based on the weight of the water-containing hide to remain in the hide.

3. (Amended) Compositions for the preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 1, wherein the superabsorbent polymers are capable of absorbing the internal moisture of the rawhide when they are deposited on the surface of the hide, while allowing a residual moisture of the order of 50% to remain in the hide.

5. (Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of animal rawhides as specified in claim 1, wherein the monomers used to form appropriate superabsorbent polymers are selected from among the following:

- acrylamide, acrylic acid, methacrylic acid, sulfomethylated or chloromethylated dimethylaminoethyl acrylate,
- chloromethylated or sulfomethylated dimethylaminoethyl-methacrylate.

6. (Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of animal rawhides as specified in claim 1, wherein the superabsorbent polymers are selected from among the following:

- crosslinked polyacrylamides
- crosslinked polyacrylates
- crosslinked acrylamide/acrylate copolymers
- sulfomethylated or chloromethylated acrylamide/dimethyl-aminoethylacrylate (ADAME) coplymers
- sulfomethylated or chloromethylated acrylamide/dimethyl-aminoethylmethacrylate (MADAME) copolymers;
- crosslinked polymers of acrylic acid or methacrylic acid, inoculated and crosslinked copolymers of the polysaccharide/acrylic or methacrylic acid type, ternary crosslinked acrylic or methacrylic acid/sulfonated acrylamide copolymers and their alkaline metal or alkaline earth salts;

- hydrolyzates of crosslinked inoculated polysaccharide/acrylate or alkyl methacrylate copolymers, hydrolyzates of reticulated inoculated polysaccharide/acrylonitrile copolymers,

- hydrolyzates of crosslinked polysaccharide/acrylamide copolymers;

- hydrolyzates of crosslinked alkyl/vinyl acetate acrylate or methacrylate copolymers;

- hyrolyzates of crosslinked inoculated starch/acrylonitrile/acrylamide/2-methylpropane sulfonic acid coplymers;

- hydrolyzates of crosslinked inoculated starch/acrylonitrile/vinylsulfonic acid copolymers; of reticulated sodium carboxy-methylcellulose and analogous products and mixtures of such products:

- crosslinked polymers of acrylic or methacrylic acid; crosslinked inoculated polysaccharide/acrylic or methacrylic acid copolymers, ternary crosslinked acrylic or methacrylic acid/acrylamide/solfonated acrylamide copolymers.

7. (Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 1, wherein such compositions comprise mixtures of superabsorbents.

8. (Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 1, wherein such compositions comprise mixtures of superabsorbents, of different grain sizes adapted to obtain optimal coverage of the surface of the hide.

9. (Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 1, wherein such compositions comprise mixtures of superabsorbents, of different chemical composition.

10. (Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 1, wherein such compositions comprise mixtures of superabsorbents, of different grain size and chemical composition.

11. (Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 1, wherein such compositions comprise mixtures of superabsorbents and at least one hydrophilic or hygroscopic agent.

12. (Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 1, wherein such compositions include the salt NaCl as the at least one other hydrophilic agent.

13. (Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 1, wherein such compositions include CaCl2, MgCl2 or KCl as the at least one other hydrophilic agent.

14. (Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 1, wherein the ratios of the superabsorbent polymer and the other hygroscopic agent or agents range from 80 to 20% by weight.

15. (Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 1, wherein the ratios of the superabsorbent polymer to the other hygroscopic agent or agents range from 65 to 35% by weight.

16. (Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 1, wherein the ratio of the superabsorbent polymer to the other hygroscopic agent or agents is about 50/50% by weight.

17. (Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 1, wherein the superabsorbent polymers have a grain size smaller than approximately 6 mm and preferably ranging from 0.3 to 4 mm.

18. (Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 1, wherein the superabsorbent polymers have a particle size ranging from 0.5 to 3 mm.

19. (Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 1, wherein the superabsorbent polymers have a grain size around 0.3 to 1 mm.

20. (Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 1, wherein a portion of grains of the superabsorbent polymers have a fine grain size and another portion have a coarser grain size.

21. (Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 1, wherein such compositions contain additives.

22. (Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 1, wherein such compositions contain at least one bactericide.

23. (Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 1, wherein such compositions contain at least one additive and/or one bactericide selected from among the following and mixtures thereof:

- Phenotip (TM)
- Acticid L.A. (TMEC)

24. (Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 1, wherein such compositions contain the following superabsorbents and hygroscopic agent:

NaCl + SAP 1 (reticulated polyacrylate; grain size 0.5-3 mm) or

SAP 2

(Reticulated polyacrylate; grain size 100-800 microns) or

SAP 1 + SAP 2

(Reticulated polyacrylate + reticulate acrylamide/acrylate copolymer, grain size 0.1 to 3 mm) or

SAP 3

(Chloroethylated, reticulated MADAME acrylamide copolymer, grain size 0.5-3 mm) or

SAP 4

(Chloromethylated, reticulated ADAME acrylamide copolymer, grain size 0.5-3 mm)

25. (Amended) Compositions for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 1, wherein such compositions contain the following agents:

SAP Aquasorb 3005 KL (TM) reticulated acrylamide/acrylate
200 g/kg hide

NaCl 200 g/kg hide.

26. (Amended) A process for preservative treatment of raw animal hides, comprising contacting a hide with a preservative composition as specified in claim 1.

27. (Amended) A process for preservative treatment of raw animal hides, wherein such process comprises at least one stage of contact of a hide, on the surface opposite the hair, with a preservative composition as specified in claim 1.

28. (Amended) A process for preservative treatment of raw animal hides as specified in claim 26, wherein such contact is continued for a period of around 24 h.

29. (Amended) Animal hides, characterized in that such hides have been treated for preservation with a composition as specified in claim 1.

30. (Amended) Animal hides, characterized in that such hides have been treated for preservation by a process as specified in claim 26.

31. (Amended) A method for preserving an animal hide comprising applying an effective amount of superabsorbent polymer(s) SAP to the animal hide.

32. (Amended) A method for preserving an animal hide comprising applying an effective amount of superabsorbent polymer(s) SAP and one or more hygroscopic agent(s) to the animal hide.

Please add new claims 33-45 as follows:

33. (New) The composition of claim 1 wherein said bactericides and preservative agents are contained in the composition.

34. (New) The composition of claim 4 wherein said super absorbent polymers are (meth)acrylic acid, acrylic acid, methacrylic acid, maleic acid, or fumaric acid.

35. (New) The composition of claim 4 wherein said super absorbent polymers are maleic anhydride.

36. (New) The composition of claim 4 wherein said super absorbent polymers are sodium (meth)acrylate, trimethylamine (meth)acrylate, triethanolamine (meth)acrylate, sodium maleate or methylamine maleate).

37. (New) The composition of claim 4 wherein said super absorbent polymers are vinylsulfonic acid, allylsulfonic acid, vinyltoluenesulfonic acid or styrene sulfonic acid.

38. (New) The composition of claim 4 wherein said super absorbent polymers are (meth)acrylic sulfonic acids (sulfopropyl (meth)acrylate, propyl 2-hydroxy-3-(meth)acryloxide sulfonic acid.

39. (New) The composition of claim 4 wherein said super absorbent polymers are (meth)allyl alcohol, ethers or esters of polyols with monoethylene unsaturation (alkylene glycols, glycerol, polyoxyalkylene polyols), hydroxyethyl (meth)acrylate, hydroxypropyl (meth)acrylate, triethlylene glycol (meth)acrylate or mono (meth)allyl ether of poly(oxyethylene) oxypropylene (in which the hydroxyl groups may be etherified or esterified).

40. (New) The composition of claim 4 wherein said super absorbent polymers are N-methylacrylamide, N-hexylacrylamide, N,N-dimethylacrylamide, N,N-di-n-propylacrylamide, N-methyl (meth)acrylamide, N-hydroxyethyl (meth)acrylamide, N,N-dihydroxyalkyl (meth)acrylamides, N,N-dihydroxyethyl (meth)acrylamide, vinyl lactames or N-vinylpyrrolidone.

41. (New) The composition of claim 4 wherein said super absorbent polymers are esters of morpho-linoalkyl, dimethylaminoethyl (meth)acrylate, diethylaminoethyl (meth)acrylate, mopholinoethyl (meth)acrylate, dimethylaminoethyl fumarate, vinyl pyridines (for example, 2-vinyl pyridine, 4-vinyl pyridine), N-vinyl pyridine) or N-vinyl imidazole.

42. (New) The composition of claim 4 wherein said super absorbent polymers are N,N,N-trimethyl-N-(meth)acryloyloxyethylammonium chloride, triethyl-N-(meth)acryloyloxyethylammonium chloride or trimethyl ammonium 2-hydroxy-3-(meth)-acryloyl-oxypropyl).

43. (New) The composition of claim 4 wherein said super absorbent polymers are reticulation products of an acrylic acid homopolymer or of a salt of this acid, acrylic acid (or acrylic acid salt)/methacrylic acid (or methacrylic acid salt), or inoculated starch/acrylic acid (or acrylic acid salt) copolymers.